

THE TOURISM BARRIERS OF THE DISABLED IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *This article seeks to address a very sensitive issue in Romania, the disabled tourism. The natural question is whether tourism can respond and meet the needs of such people. Internationally, the researches in detail about tourism for people with disabilities are limited in this direction, and those who exist are focused more on lack of physical access to certain services in the hotel units.*

As for the problems (barriers) that a person with disabilities may face when seeking to participate in the act of travel there were found numerous internal and external barriers in trying to participate in tourism activities

The study seeks to identify how normal people behave towards people with disabilities and aims to demonstrate the existence of correlations between the responses of the interviewees, which would lead to the presentation as close to the truth as possible of the results from the sample (section), transposed over the population from which the sample belongs and also lead to finding conclusions on which there could be made several proposals.

Keywords: *tourism, disability, social tourism, attitude, internal and external barriers*

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1.Introduction

Tourism in its current form appeared only in the XIXth century. Actions related to social tourism began in 1936, when the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** agreed that the on access to paid leave should be done by tourism (Convention No.52.). In essence, this agreement has also been mentioned in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** in 1948, stating that “everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay”.

Thus we can say that tourism has emerged as a social practice due to the ethical demands of the representatives of employees, justifying the legitimacy of a specific right, so thus the right to travel, as an extension of the right to work, to rest and to take paid leave.

However, some social historians say that tourism has emerged a few decades earlier, with the opening of camps for disadvantaged children, as well as the opening of the twentieth century, youth hostels. The emergence of hostels and bed & breakfast accommodation system occurred in the late nineteenth century. At that time, most tourist facilities were the ones in the private sector or belonging to other organizations willing to improve tourist access to a much larger number of people and making a profit.

After the Second World War ended some social policies were implemented in several countries as subsidies for private housing, their renovation, modernization of equipment and infrastructure, and as well as aid to the population. Also, many associations have been created under different unions, travelling families, work councils, etc. all had as main objectives social development and expanding social tourism.

2. Disabled tourism

This article seeks to address a very sensitive issue in Romania, the disabled tourism. According to the 448 / 6 December 2006 law , people with disabilities are those people who, because of physical illness, mental or sensory impairments, lack skills that prevent them from carrying out normal daily activities, requiring protective measures in support of recovery and social inclusion.

The natural question is whether tourism can respond and meet the needs of such people. Internationally, the researches in detail about tourism for people with disabilities are limited in this direction, and those who exist are focused more on lack of physical access to certain services in the hotel units.

Very few studies have been published concerning the issue of tourism and people with disabilities (Burnett & Baker, 2001, Darcy, 1998, 2002). Some academics specialized on tourism were concerned with this problem in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Smith, 1987; Muloin, 1992), Smith's work being one of the few works published in a major tourism publication. Since then, academics in the field of tourism have been silent on this subject. Also referring to the disabilities literature which is characterized by the lack of consideration of those issues, identify one or two studies. Various studies are as well illustrated by the Canadian Tourism Commission (1997), Nurnett and Baker's work (2001) in the U.S..

The broad spectrum of disability problem has become a field of study since the early 50s. Typically, these studies and debates related to persons with disabilities, in orbit around the **social model of disability**, emerged in Britain in 1976 from the activity against segregation by the Physically Unfit Union.

Disability is a generic term for diseases or disabilities, activity limitations and participation restrictions as defined in the international classification of functioning, and health disability adopted and approved

by the World Health Organization to show the negative aspect of individual context interaction (Law 448 / 6 December. 2006, Art. 5, pct.16).

Researchers Hugh and Paterson (1997) say that the company creates an environment that does not take into account the needs of those with disabilities. They tried to make a clear distinction between those with impaired and those with disabilities. Such **disorders** refer to the normal functioning of the individual caused by mental or sensory dysfunctions and **disability** is the loss or limitation of opportunities to live normally in society on an equal level with others due to physical barriers. The fact is however that until nowadays a social model for people with disabilities wasn't treated in tourism literature.

3. OBSTACLES IN ACCESS OF THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

As for the problems (barriers) that a person with disabilities may face when seeking to participate in the act of travel there were found numerous **internal and external barriers** in trying to participate in tourism activities. These barriers can be classified as:

Internal barriers are obstacles that must be overcome before a person becomes active in terms of tourism and that the individual has the greatest control over these barriers. In this way people with disabilities should be helped through institutionalization at the recovery units. For example in Romania this aid is extremely small as about 3.62% of people benefit from institutionalization

External barriers - which may inhibit their journey, they may limit the options or reduce satisfaction. This category includes: *architectural barriers* such as stairs, toilet accessibility, accommodation, and *environmental barriers* difficult paths, tree roots or other obstructions outside, *means of transport*, especially the local variety of means of transport, which includes cars, buses and taxis ; *laws and regulations* that

prohibit the people with disabilities to bring necessary equipment with them, *communication difficulties* both at home and at the receiving person, *negative attitudes* from service providers and *incorrect information*. Tourists with a disability must consider that foreign travel agencies must break down these barriers.

In 2002, Darcy reveals that **attitudes towards individuals with disabilities**, and research undertaken on this market segment, in particular, have evolved significantly in the last 25 years. Originally attitudes, regarding disability were conceptualized in a framework of personal tragedy, concentrated on individual helplessness. The person was treated as an unfortunate victim. Since then, the emergence of political movements for the rights of persons with disabilities have changed the overall impression of personal tragedy, to disability as a form of social oppression.

The way in which disability is conceptualized and natural attitudes have a profound effect on society and people with disabilities. First of all, attitude influences individual behavior regarding people with disabilities. Understanding disability as an "abnormality" of a person rather than a social failure, it outlines behaviors that lead to isolation and marginalization. In many cases, certain behaviors are not intentional but rather are rooted in social practices "non-disabled". Second, attitudes form public opinions, attitudes which influence social and public policies, resource allocation and access to education, transportation, jobs, etc.. Finally, prevailing attitudes influence the perception of people with disabilities of themselves .

4. RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study seeks to identify how normal people behave towards people with disabilities and aims to demonstrate the existence of correlations between the responses of the interviewees, which would lead to the presentation as close to the truth

as possible of the results from the sample (section), transposed over the population from which the sample belongs and also lead to finding conclusions on which there could be made several proposals.

Between the specific objectives we find: knowledge or the social prerequisites, psychological and cultural of the interviewees; discovering the causes that lead to negative feelings, on people with disabilities, eliminate the causes, proposed ways of intervention and trying to change the behavior of the normal people.

Knowing the psychological assumptions helps determine the way people act, understand the personal points view and also allows the identification of certain measures by which those with disabilities could be integrated and accepted in society.

Discovering the causes which lead in forming an opinion regarding people with disabilities could be one of the most important secondary objective, this objective is important because it may act directly on the cause and not on the effect that results.

Finally the directions of intervention in modifying behavior of the normal people towards people with disabilities should be materialized at the end of the present study. The modeling of the behavior occurs when the stimuli are identified, the basic behavioral processes are analyzed, the explanatory variables of behavior and behavioral response.

5. RESULTS INTERPRETATION

The research was conducted on the basis of a questionnaire. Sample size was 100 people chosen randomly. The sample was structured: 40% of them are under 24 years, 20% of people are between 25-30 years old, 8% of people between 31-35 years old , 14% between 36-45 years and the rest, 18% are people over 45 years. Of these 62% were women and 38% were male. Regarding the marital status of respondents 44% aren't married, 34% are married and the rest belong

to other categories (divorced, widowed or living with partner).

The study was conducted by distributing questionnaires in urban areas, in Timisoara, and 62% of the respondents have completed either a college, a university or a post-graduate study, while 32% are high school graduates. We can say that the education level has a major influence in assessing the behavior of people with disabilities, in the knowledge that education is directly proportional to the positive responses in terms of acceptance, understanding and helping these people with disabilities. This can be observed from the study because the question of concerning "helping people with disabilities", 94% of the respondents would be willing to help such a person and 72% of them, have done it already.

Regarding the attitudes of normal people towards people with disabilities in society, it is found that the opinions of those people are divided. On a scale containing five possible answers: from compassion, mercy, acceptance, restraint, and indifference it is found that compared to the normal version of acceptance chosen by 34% of respondents, there is a balance between compassion and restraint (16% of the responses for each question) and an imbalance between compassion and indifference, they have chosen 32% and 2% of respondents (an insignificant percentage). Because according to the glossary "compassion" is associated with a sense of understanding and sympathy to the suffering and misery concerning someone; positive feelings total overall 82% of responses, a sign that these people are understood and are given support from individuals.

Regarding the people's situation in Romania, it is not a very good one because the perception to the human rights of persons with disabilities knows negative aspects. To analyze the situation of peoples with disabilities in Romania there were developed three questions:

1. *"Do you think that there are respected the human rights of people with disabilities in Romania?"*: 68% consider that the right are not respected, 22% said yes and 10% of them do not know or are not interested.

2. *"Do you consider that people with disabilities should receive certain gratuities?"*: 84%, have replied yes and 16% said that they do not.

3. *"Should programs against discrimination of the disabled, be introduced in schools?"*: 62% said yes, 16% said no and 22% believe that these things must be learned at home.

In conclusion, the Romanian society does not help people with disabilities in Romania and the fundamental rights are not respected. In principle these people would be helped by the state through the granting of gratuities and benefits. What is crucial is that programs against discrimination of the disabled should be introduced in schools, because it is known that the children's education must contain rules that causes them to act ethically and morally towards these people.

When asked "What do you think the integration of disabled people in society", the answers "very important" and "Important" occupy the largest share of responses 54% and 28%. We can say that 82% of the respondents believes that integration of persons with disabilities in society is extremely important and agree with this point of view, and consider that such people should not be marginalized.

Also on the problem in terms of employment chances of people with disabilities. In this sense 78% of people with normal capacity to work, inform that employers are reluctant in hiring these people. 80% of those surveyed said they have colleagues at work with disabilities and that there are no cooperation or social issues, but there exists a significant number of people who would not agree to collaborate at work with them, which is

concerning because 14% of them answered like this

Regarding the participation of disabled people to the act of tourism, individuals answers were hopeful because even if, as the disabled are not accepted at work, the situation is different in a hotel, 92% of respondents would not be disturbed by the presence of people with disabilities in a hotel where they were individually penned.

When asked "What do you think about tourism products for people with disabilities?" being an open question, respondents were able to freely choose their answers without being restricted by answers. The answers to the questions above are different and presented in a special way by each interviewee. The most frequent response was *"I have not heard about such products for people with disabilities"* Those who have heard and know these products are of the opinion that the number of products is very small compared to the number of people with disabilities, and that these products are not known even by the recipients, and are difficult to obtain even if you belong in that category disabled. The most important thing about these products is that it gives people with disabilities the opportunity to socialize and integrate into the society.

Another view of respondents: state organizations, regional and local ones do not offer aid to the disabled.

Regarding the promotion of these products, media channels do not consider this as an important fact and do not promote them because they do not obtain financial benefits. Existing channels that promote such products are local ones but of no national importance.

Other opinions say that those people with disabilities should receive such products irrespective of destination, travel time or means of transport chosen, thus a social development of tourism and also building access roads and other facilities absolutely

necessary for each hotel , motel, resort, tourist destination.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Surrounded by negative attitudes, people with disabilities can internalize negative beliefs and attitudes. It is recognized that the nature and severity of disability can affect the scope of activities to which a person can participate, but may also influence how the tourist experience is formed.

After analyzing the data we can say that people with disabilities are accepted in society by all other categories of people by supporting the integration process, respondents have the opinion that this process is of great importance and that it should exist in any modern society; besides the fact that the states must be required to provide the disabled and give certain financial gratuities and psychosocial help.

Most people have the opinion that people with disabilities and people with disabilities face difficulties in finding jobs, qualified or unqualified. Their problems are accentuated and supported by the reluctance of employers, higher health costs and other types of insurances. In addition to these serious problems, these people are refused at interviews because of their condition. Although 86% of respondents would not be "bothered" to work with people with disabilities that is not reflected in obtaining a job, from the individuals concerned.

Granting help to such a person is a fairly widespread phenomenon in Romania, as reflected by the number of responses, which shows a great solidarity among people belonging to all social categories and more than 10% of respondents have in their families people with disabilities and face with all the problems that such a person may have.

The most important person's perspective refers to introducing these special programs against discrimination for people with disabilities in schools. These programs lead to changes in behavior and attitudes towards